DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 206 613 SP 018 864

AUTHOR Broom, Eric F.
TITLE Meeting the Educational and Sporting Needs of the Elite Young Athlete: A Comparison of National Organisational Models.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Athletes; Athletic Coaches; *Capitalism; *Communism; Curriculum Design; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foreign Countries; Gifted; Physical Education Facilities; Self Actualization; *Talent Development; Talent Identification; *Training Methods

ABSTRACT

Models developed in various countries to meet the dual needs for education and training of the highly talented young athlete are examined. It is the policy in socialist countries to bring together the best available resources in young sports talent, coaches, and facilities. Programs are structured to ensure that the youngsters who attend the sports schools can adhere to heavy training schedules, and at the same time obtain an education suited to their aptitude and career objectives. The overall objectives of these elite athletic programs are to develop world class athletes, to further the development of elite coaches, and to balance these with intellectual and social development. A comparison is made between these schools and those of Western Europe and North America where many talented youngsters are excluded from elite sport training because of heavy fees, lack of time, and training costs. Examples are given of attempts in England and France to emulate the socialist balance between development of talent and academic excellence. It is pointed out that countries which successfully combine education and training are more likely to retain the interest of talented young athletes and produce a more socially balanced human being. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
ERIC BROOM
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED206613

Meeting the Educational and Sporting Needs of the Elite Young Athlete: A Comparison of National Organisational Models

Eric F. Broom, Ph.D.
University of British Columbia
Canada

As international competition intensifies countries are attempting to identify sporting talent at earlier ages and to develop programmes which enable such talent to move at the fastest possible rate towards maturity. It appears that to reach international standard in most sports it is necessary to devote between twenty and thirty hours each week to training for at least five years. Sporting talent manifests itself in the early teenage years, and in some sports, such as swimming and gymnastics, even earlier. These are vital years for schooling and it is not easy to successfully manage the time and energy demands of education and training at the same time. This paper will examine models developed in various countries to meet these dual needs of the highly talented young athlete.

The concept of a school which combines education and sport in roughly equal proportions is widely regarded as having been first developed in the German Democratic Republic in the early 1950's. However specialist sports schools in East Germany, the first of which was opened in 1952, were preceeded by more than a century by schools with a similar program - the English public schools.

English public schools, despite the name, are private, fee-paying institutions the first of which was established in the fifteenth century. In the early nineteenth century industrialization and urbanization in England resulted in great social changes, with the middle class rising to power socially, politically and economically. A major remaining aspiration of the middle class was to emulate the gentility of the aristocracy,

SP018864

and education was seen as the primary vehicle of ascent. By mid-century the middle class were firmly established in the ancient public schools, previously the preserve of the aristocracy, and the newer schools which had developed in their image. In the public schools and the universities the middle class adapted, refined and organized sport and employed it as an important part of education.

Students at the English public schools in the mid nineteenth Century, and today, spend between three and five hours a day in training and playing sport, using good facilities and guided by knowledgeable, enthusiastic teachers. It is no coincidence that up until World War 2, and beyond, when sport became more widely democratized, a large proportion of members of English International teams, in such sports as cricket, rugby, field hockey, rowing and to a lesser extent track and field were products of the public schools and universities system.

Sport in the public schools is an integral part of education. Its objectives are the development of character, leadership, and, as may be deduced from the most popular sports listed earlier, the subjugation of the individual to the team. The creation of records and winning has never been a major consideration.

If a major objective was to develop the maximum number of Olympic and World champions the English public school sport system would have a crucial weakness in the extreme limitations of the sports talent pool from which it draws. Its students are drawn from a very small proportion of an age group, namely the top of the socio-economic pyramid. Although some scholarships are available, the English public schools select primarily on the ability of the family to pay the school fees, with the proviso that entering students must have attained certain academic standards.

In spite of the very considerable handicap under which it operates the English public school system has produced some outstanding athletes, and has demonstrated conclusively and consistently over more than a century that students can concurrently achieve excellence in scholarship and sport.

In contrast to the English public school system East Germany casts its talent-seeking net wide, and selects on the basis of sports talent from the total population in a particular age group.

One of the basic tenets of socialist education is that all children must be given every opportunity to develop their natural gifts, and that talent in sport should be regarded no differently from talent in mathematics, science, music or art. The sports school structure was therefore established to ensure that children with the potential to become World class athletes, for that was a central objective, could combine the standard academic curriculum with the intensive and time consuming sports training necessary to attain the higher levels of performance.

In the socialist countries the typical sports school structure is pyramidical in nature, and is essentially composed of two major types of school. At the base of the pyramid are the sports day schools, which operate independently of the regular schools, and at the apex are the residential sports boarding schools which offer both general education and sports education.

The most common sports day school in the U.S.S.R., for example, is the Children's and Young People's Sports School, of which there were more than 5000 in 1979 attended by 1.75 million members. Approximately fifty percent of the schools are under the jurisdiction of local school boards,

and the remainder are operated by the trades union sports societies and the large sports clubs such as the armed forces and police.

For example, each of the sixteen 1st Division and twenty 2nd Division soccer clubs run their own junior soccer school. In the early stages of development many schools offered up to ten sports, but today most concentrate on no more than three, and some only on a single sport. When only one sport is offered the school is known as a specialist children's and young people's sports school.

Only a few of the sports day schools have their own facilities. Those schools associated with a club gain access to generally excellent facilities, which for the total population are in short supply. The sports schools run by the school boards rarely use normal school premises, which in the main have inadequate sports facilities, but more often use rented accomodation which is administered completely separately from the normal school.

Enrollment at these schools follows a recommendation from a physical education teacher, or a request from a parent, and is based on success in tests to determine sport attainment and potential, and upon satisfactory academic standards. Children usually enter the schools at 11 years of age, but for some sports they may start as young as 7 years old.

Attendance is after normal school hours, which in the U.S.S.R., and most socialist countries, is from 8.0 a.m. to 1.0 p.m. on six days each week. Younger children usually attend for two hour sessions three times each week, and the time involvement increases to five sessions of three hours for those sixteen and older. Instruction is in small groups, usually a maximum of twelve children at the younger ages and decreasing in size

with age. As with all schools in socialist states the sports schools are free to members.

The sports schools are staffed by full-time professional coaches, who in some instances spend part of their professional life working in the adult clubs. Similarly, the instructors in the Pioneer Palaces, which operate from 1.0 p.m. to 10.0 p.m. daily, at week-ends and in the holidays and offer a wide range of recreational and cultural pursuits, including physical activities, are full time professionals, quite separate from the teachers in the regular schools.

At the apex of the sports school structure are the sports boarding schools, which were first developed by the G.D.R. in 1952. Each of the nineteen schools in East Germany is now attached to one of the twenty-seven elite sports clubs which have been established to produce champion athletes, and which are generously equipped, and staffed by the nations best coaches. The developing youngsters thus rub shoulders with some of the world's finest athletes and are constantly motivated to feats of emulation.

The success achieved by sports boarding schools in the G.D.R. led to their adoption by other socialist states. In the U.S.S.R. the first sports boarding school was opened in 1962, several years after similar schools had been established for music, ballet and fine arts.

Children are invited to attend a school based on their performance at Regional and National School Games, and finally selected after successful completion of a ten day entrance examination. The usual starting age is between seven and eleven years of age, depending upon the sport. Each school caters only to the Olympic sports, some offering several sports, others only one.

The time spent on sport increases with age from an average of ten hours per six day week at 12 years of age to twenty hours per week at 18 years of age. In addition to sport practise the children also study sport theory which includes history, philosophy and psychology of sport. At the younger age the children spend approximately twenty-five hours each week on standard subjects, and this decreases to twenty-three hours at age eighteen. The schools have separate teaching and coaching staffs, in sufficient number to ensure small instructor/pupil ratios.

It is considered important that children maintain the requirements of the standard curriculum, and with the advantages of small classes and good teachers it is claimed that both academic and health records are better than the national average.

Children who fail to progress satisfactorily in either education or sport are required to return to the day schools. In the national school system children attend until seventeen years of age, but for those at boarding schools it is customary to take an extra year to complete the education program.

For boarders at these schools accommodation, meals, tuition and coaching are free, and the travel costs of children making home visits at weekends or holidays are also covered by the school. Schools in the U.S.S.R. are funded primarily by national, state and city education departments, and in addition many receive assistance from industry. The Leningrad swimming school, for example, has twenty industrial sponsors. The same Leningrad school has also developed an extensive feeder system among schools and clubs in the city, which direct promising swimmers to the boarding school for examination.

In the socialist countries the sports school system brings together the best available resources in young sports talent, coaches and facilities. The talent-seeking net is cast wide to cover every corner of the country, and is recast at intervals for late developers. Well qualified coaches are attracted to the schools, and in 1978 more than half of the U.S.S.R.'s 60,000 full-time coaches were working in sports schools. Programs are structured to ensure that the youngsters who attend the sports schools can adhere to heavy training schedules, and at the same time obtain an education suited to their aptitude, interest and career objectives. Within the socialist countries sports schools are regarded as one of the vital keys to international sporting success.

Western European countries which have made some attempt to adopt the East German model, or a modification of it, are West Germany, France and Great Britain.

In 1978 West Germany established four regional residential sports schools for young gymnasts from nine years of age upwards. A total of 250 students attend the schools and they spend approximately half of each day training under the direction of national coaches who are based at the schools. The schools are fully funded by the Deutsche Sporthilfe (Sports Aid Foundation), an autonomous fund raising body.

The French program, which started in 1978, is based at L'INCEP, the National Sports Institute outside Paris. Selection of highly talented young athletes from those recommended by the national sports federation takes place between 11 and 13 years of age depending on the sport, following a series of tests at L'INCEP.

By 1980 the Youth Elite Athlete Program included seven sports; track and field, swimming, cycling, table tennis, judo, fencing, and gymnastics, and some 300 athletes between the ages of 11 and 25 were in residence at L'INCEP. Five national coaches are employed by the Institute to work with the youth program, and a further 25 national coaches work with the program on a part time basis.

The young athletes average four hours a day training for their sport, and the academic program which is flexible, comprises the other 50% of the program. During the pre-competition phase academic work could occupy as little as one hour a day, and during competition it could cease completely. Overseas competition is encouraged as part of the education of both athletes and coaches. Classes missed because of the demand of training and competition are made up by the special tutors when the athletes return to the Institute.

The non-sport segment of the program is geared to the aptitude and interests of the athletes. At 18 years of age arrangements are made for those who are eligible to attend nearby universities, and for those who are not to be employed either at the Institute or in the neighbourhood. The usual maximum length of stay at the Institute is four years, although this may be extended. At the outset it is emphasised that the Institute program is part of the preparation for life, and the departing athlete is given assistance to resettle away from the Institute.

All expenses of athletes attending the Institute, including those incurred in the once monthly visits home of those under 18 years of age, are paid by the Sports Federations. In addition, athletes receive grants from the National Sports Ministry.

The overall objectives of the Youth Elite Athlete Program are to develop world class athletes, and to further the development of elite coaches, but to balance these with intellectual and social development.

In England almost all public schools have continued to adhere to the traditional pattern of education and sport described earlier, but since the early 1960's Millfield, and, more recently, Kelly College, have charted a new course. Millfield, which was founded in 1935, now has an enrolment of eleven hundred pupils, a little over one third of whom are girls. The school encourages the pursuit of excellence in scholarship, music, visual and performing arts, and sport.

> Millfield's attitude to sport is in key with the central belief that education is concerned with the whole human being, and that every pupil has the capacity to achieve something worthwhile, or even to excel, in some area of school life. The discovery of such capacities is the school's first duty; for an achievement in one field has over and over again proved to be the key to the will to succeed in school life as a whole.

Pupils chose from more than thirty sports, which are taught by well-qualified teachers in excellent facilities. For the really outstanding athletes special coaching periods are arranged in lesson-time. Millfield has an extensive bursary program, and while no bursaries are awarded purely for sport, outstanding achievement in sport may well be a decisive factor in a bursary award.

In the fifteen year period between 1964 and 1979 137 Millfield pupils have attained senior international (over 17 years) selection while still at school in 22 different sports and a further 70 have been selected for junior internationls. In the last five years alone 73 pupils have been awarded international status.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, the education of gifted children in State schools became a focus of concern among teachers and parents throughout Great Britain. One of the official government responses to this concern was the publication in 1978 of the Joint Circular, "The Development of Sporting Talent in Children of School Age".[1] The group responsible for the circular worked from the fundamental premise that any individual with potential in a particular sport should be given every opportunity to develop his or her talent, but it stressed that it was not advocating a reallocation of resources at the expense of the less gifted. It concluded that the more flexible educational arrangements can become in catering for the needs of talented individuals, the greater the likelihood will be that gifted young sportsmen and women will be able to attain their full potential.[2]

Among the suggestions for optimising the use of existing coaching and facilities, without additional public expenditure, were the adoption of the 'consortium' concept, whereby a number of schools combine their resources to provide specialist centres; a corporate approach in which the resources of schools, municipal recreation departments and other relevant agencies are co-ordinated; and greater flexibility in timetabling for older pupils.

Long before 1978 however individual school boards had been making provisions for talented young athletes, and several examples are now provided. The London Borough of Newham has been offering opportunities for interested and talented youngsters since 1963. At the present time the Borough operates twenty seven centres which cater for twelve different sports. Each centre is based on school facilities, and the program is jointly operated by the Physical Education advisors and the Youth Service. The school

board provides all facilities and equipment without charge, and appoints and supervises the coaches; the Youth Service pays the coaches' salaries.

Each centre in a particular sport operates from 6.0 to 8.0 p.m. for school age children and from 8.0 to 10.0 p.m. for older youth, on two evenings a week, and some also on Saturdays. The age range in the two groups is from 10 to 23 years of age. School students pay a fee of $2.0 per term, and youth $4.0 per term.

Each centre is administered by a Warden, usually a member of the school physical education staff, who receives extra remuneration for this responsibility. Coaches at the centre have the appropriate qualifications, in the form of a coaching certificate of the National Sports Organizations, and experience. The school board employs thirteen peripatetic instructors, in such activities as judo, fencing, dance, etc. who are not qualified teachers. These instructors teach part time in the schools and also coach at the evening centres. They act as links between the school program, the student centres and the youth centres. In addition a number of teachers coach in the program, for which they receive additional remuneration.

The centres provide opportunities for the gifted performer to progress to a very high standard. Large numbers of the participants gain representative honours at both county and national level. "Of equal importance are the opportunities offered for social development which is reflected in the standards of appearance, conduct and self-discipline. The centres in no way interfere with the pursuit of the various centre activities at the schools. Indeed, there is every indication that schools benefit from the system".[3]

In North Staffordshire the School Board sponsors a club known as the City of Stoke-on-Trent Club, which has sections for swimming, cycling, canoeing, trampolining, track and field, badminton, squash, table tennis and Olympic gymnastics. All centres operate in non-school hours in school facilities, with the exception of gymnastics which has exclusive use of a converted drill hall purchased by the school board. All facilities are provided by the school board without charge.

A proposal presently before the board calls for the centralizing of the top gifted swimmers into two high schools which have indoor pools. Such an arrangement would reduce the amount of time students spend travelling between their schools and the swimming pools, and means that they would receive their school lessons and swimming training at the same location. If this proposal is accepted two teachers would be appointed to work 50 per cent of their time in school and 50 per cent coaching before and after school hours.

All coaches in the program, most of whom are teachers, are required to hold coaching qualifications of a particular sports governing body. The coaches are remunerated for a proportion of the hours worked, and work additional hours on a voluntary basis.

In Stirling the school board has established the Sports Development Scheme which consists of a school based structure of clubs which provide opportunities for participation from the introductory stage of each sport through to international level. At present five sports, badminton, basketball, volleyball, gymnastics and canoeing are offered to those from nine years of age to adults. Twenty-four centres are organized so that a participant may progress from beginner stage to advanced performer according to ability, and in 1980 some 4600 members received coaching two, three or four times each week .

The scheme is administered by a full-time Sports Development Officer, a part-time assistant and four part-time coordinators, each of whom also teach half time in the schools, and two full-time Advanced Training Centre Directors in canoeing and gymnastics. Each of the part-time officers mentioned above, and the teacher-coaches who coach in the centres in the evenings and weekends receive extra remuneration.

An important part of the scheme is the training and upgrading of coaches. All coaches are required to have the appropriate coaching award of a national governing body, and training courses are held regularly. The canoeing centres have been linked with an established local canoe club and a number of canoeists have won national and international selection at junior level.

In North America the High School extra-curricular programme is particularly strong, but the emphasis is on relatively few sports - football, basketball, wrestling. Sport in Canadian High Schools attains considerably lower standards than their American counterparts. Both countries have a network of private clubs and academies outside the school system, many of which are commercially operated, in such sports as swimming, gymnastics, figure skating and hockey. It is reported in the United States alone there are close to one thousand private gymnastics academies, and American standards in this sport have risen dramatically in the last ten years.

Talented young athletes who attend these clubs regularly devote between twenty-five and thirty-five hours per week to training. Travel to and from the club involves additional time. Fees vary from sport to sport, but in general they are considerable. For example, the total expenses for a young gymnast in residence at one gymnastics academy approach $10,000 per year.

It is not easy to fit in on education when sport makes such heavy time and energy demands. Further, many talented youngsters are excluded from membership because of heavy fees and training costs. In other words the system imposes major barriers to the young athlete attempting to combine training and education.

In Canada the Seneka-North York Gymnastics programme has been developed on lines similar to the European models. This programme, which began in 1978, has 37 student elite gymnasts, ranging in age from nine to twelve years, who receive their schooling from two teachers in portable classrooms located on the Seneka college campus. Gymnastics training, under the direction of those full-time coaches occurs each day from 8.0 to 10.0 a.m., and from 3.0 to 7.0 p.m., with a three hour optional session on Saturday. Classes are from 10.0 a.m. to 3.0 p.m. with a one hour lunchbreak. The programme is subsidized by both Federal and Provincial governments, and parents pay annual fees of $500 for each child.

The overall objective of the programme is to identify youngsters who can be trained towards gymnastics excellence; more specifically to place students on the 1988 Canadian womens' Olympic gymnastics team. A programme evaluation after two years of operation concluded that one of the major strengths was that it allowed youngsters to combine education and training, and have them finished and go home by seven o'clock in the evening. Arrangements are being made for similar educational arrangements with a High School as the children progress through the school system.

The conclusion of this review is that the mix of highly talented young athletes, expert coaches, and adequate time and facilities is a potent combination when the objective is the development of the highest possible

level of athletic performance. Countries that believe that success in international sports competition is important will intensify their efforts to identify talent at an early age and establish programmes to encourage the development of that talent. Further, that countries which select talent from a total population will be proportionally more successful than countries which select from only a segment of population. Finally, countries which successfully combine education and training, and make it possible to concurrently attain high standards in both, are more likely to retain the interest of young athletes and produce a more socially balanced human being.

1. The Development of Sporting Talent in Children of School Age. Department of Education and Science, Circular 16/78, London, England.
2. Ibid, p.4.
3. Department of Education and Science Report on the Centre, 1975, London, England, p. 4.